

and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventeenth.

GEORGE BUSH

Proclamation 6488 of October 9, 1992

In Celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the White House

By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

The home of our Nation's Presidents is a house that truly belongs to the American people, and as we commemorate the 200th anniversary of the laying of the White House cornerstone, we also celebrate the great system of democratic government that this historic building symbolizes to our Nation and the world.

Although the White House cornerstone was dedicated on October 13, 1792, the story of the famous home at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue actually begins with the framing of our Constitution several years earlier. In Article 1, Section 8, of that great document, our Nation's Founders provided for the establishment of a special district to serve "as the Seat of the Government of the United States." Under the direction of President George Washington, a site was selected for the Federal City in January 1791, and the district eventually began to take shape according to the grand vision of Major Pierre Charles L'Enfant, who submitted his plans to the Congress in December of that year. In early 1792, the Commissioners for the District of Columbia advertised a nationwide competition for the design of the President's house. They chose the entry of Irish-born architect James Hoban, perhaps mindful of President Washington's recommendation that "for the President's house, I would design a building that should also look forward, but execute no more of it at present than might suit the circumstances of this country, when it shall be first wanted."

President Washington never inhabited the White House, but when it was occupied by President John Adams and his family in 1800, Abigail Adams wrote to her sister that the stately yet unfinished "castle of a house" appeared "built for ages to come." In its beauty and elegance, the White House looked forward with all the exuberance and optimism of our young Republic. At the same time, however, its simple balance of form and function reflected an unpretentious spirit befitting our system of limited government and representative democracy.

The White House underwent a number of changes and additions in succeeding years, with President Thomas Jefferson and architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe designing its terraces and interior, respectively. In 1814, the building was nearly destroyed by fire when British forces invaded the city of Washington, and today Dolley Madison's rescue of Gilbert Stuart's famous portrait of George Washington, along with her husband's papers, is a celebrated part of White House history and folklore. Sadly, the exterior sandstone walls and interior brickwork were all that remained of the White House when James Hoban was asked to begin its reconstruction. Not until the Presidency of Andrew Jackson

some 40 years after the laying of the cornerstone was the White House truly completed with the building of the north portico.

Since that time, the White House has experienced two major renovations—one in 1902 and another from 1948–1952. During the latter renovation, James Hoban's wood structure was entirely rebuilt, yet within its original sandstone and brick walls, and today the White House continues to appear much as it did during the days of John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Engineers and historians have worked hard to honor original schemes for the design and decoration of the White House, and succeeding Administrations have taken an increasing interest in the preservation of this historic home. In recent years the White House Historical Association, which was chartered in 1961, has played a leading role in funding the conservation of the priceless antiques and paintings that furnish the White House, and this year restoration of its exterior features will be complete.

Our Nation's Founders would be proud of the enduring beauty of "the President's house," just as they would be delighted by the continuing success of their great experiment in self-government. Because the White House represents such an important part of our American heritage, it has been included as a unit of our National Park System since 1933. More than 1 million people tour this magnificent home each year, in addition to the countless visitors who pause nearby to view its grounds and to reflect on its storied past. Much of our Nation's history has passed through these walls, and it is here that much of our future will be shaped as well.

On this 200th anniversary of the White House, as we celebrate the past and look forward—as did our ancestors—to the ages to come, we do well to repeat the timeless prayer of President John Adams, the first resident of this important home:

I pray Heaven to bestow the best of blessings
on this house and all that shall hereafter
inhabit it. May none but honest and wise
men ever rule under this roof.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE BUSH, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby encourage all Americans to join in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the laying of the White House cornerstone on October 13, 1992.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this ninth day of October in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and seventeenth.

GEORGE BUSH